

Echoes and Whispers: The Mars Report

by A Man Named Leer

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Summary: The story of the Mars DefenseTeam just hours before Earth was invaded by the Covenant, sparking the legendary sequel to Bungie's epic. Final chapter is up! Fairly short read, so read and then... review!

1. Chapter 1

****Echoes and Whispers: The Mars Report****

****Chapter 1****

United Nations Space Command Priority Transmission

FLASH 39718Aâ€"21

Encryption Code: BLACK

From: CODE NAME ECHO

To/ Fleet Admiral Harper,

Subject: Mars Defense Grid under Attack

Classification: Emergency (XXX-XD Directive)

/ start file/Decryption Protocol/

Per general order 63.97.150, I am under protocol to report all suspicious happenings within the Solar System, and have the authority to take command of all of the MAC-guns via intranet and the crew at each station upon death of the Admiral on-station. I hereby exercise that authority and order all MAC-guns to open fire and have all available arms-bearers to prepare for attack.

Attacker Identity: Covenant

You are authorized with code-word clearance LIBERTY-FIVE-RED to review the following material of immediate benefit. Any breach of code-word classification confidentiality is punishable by the death penalty as per UNSC MIL-JAG 4465/LHG, the Wartime Articles of Secrecy, and the amended Articles of the United Security Acts of 2162.

/ end/

/ postscript/

MESSAGE HAS BEEN UPGRADED TO "Restricted" PER PROTOCOL 112.73.59

/ attached file 1 of 5/

October 19, 2552 (Military Calendar)

Subject: Security Feed 07

Issuing Officer: Field-Engineer F. C. Fernandez, Aboard the
_Alexandria _Orbital Defense Station: Mars, Power Station Gamma, 3rd
Floor

VIDEO, NO AUDIO:

_The video screen shows a feed of a man fixing a box with wiring of some sort inside. Sparks fly from the box and the man is apparently hurt by it. He walks off-screen, and it is noted that the wall's shadow lights up and two plasma streaks go by. The video ends as the camera suddenly becomes bright and then fails to give any video feed.

—

END VIDEO

/ end/

/ attached file 2 of 5/

October 19, 2552 (Military Calendar)

Subject: Helmet-Camera Feed 139

Issuing Officers: Master Sergeant J. R. Xan and Private M. A. Biggs,
Aboard the _Alexandria _Orbital Defense Station: Mars, Security
Station Upsilon, 5th Floor

VIDEO:

_The video pans in onto a Grunt fumbling with a movable turret behind a phalanx of overlapping shields held up by Jackals. _

"We're never getting out! COMM is down still, sir, and I've only got nine rounds!" a voice from off-screen says frantically.

_The camera turns and shows a man, obviously the Master Sergeant, in dress uniform holding his left arm with his right hand, covering an unseen wound. The camera zooms out revealing that the man, along with the one with the camera-helmet, is behind a small wall. The wall is charred with plasma-burns, as the Master Sergeant puts a clip into his magnum and takes three shots and then quickly ducks before nearly

being hit by a plasma streak. _

"Calm down, son. Pick your targets and fire only when you're sure you'll hit." the Master Sergeant responds.

_An unusual noise is sounded from behind the camera's view. The camera turns to look and reveals an Elite in red armor firing off five rounds in their exposed position. The Master Sergeant screams from behind the camera and the Elite changes targets to the one with the camera. The Private takes five shots, before the Elite jumps behind a wall just before its shields went out. The camera turns to the dead or incapacitated Master Sergeant, bleeding inexplicably from the left arm and chest. There is also a hint of plasma burn and bleeding under his right arm, on his right hip, but it isn't confirmed. The Private panics before you on camera a hand picking up the magnum, a single shot firing, and the camera falling to its side, giving a lopsided view of the Master Sergeant's left foot and leg. _

/ end/

2. Chapter 2

****Chapter 2****

/ attached file 3 of 5/

October 19, 2552 (Military Calendar)

Subject: Camera Feed 10

Issuing Officers: Admiral H.K. de Cortes, Senior Sergeant C. Z. Henderson, Commander S. Pier, Private J. R. Hernandez, Private A. L. Loisdottir, Aboard _Alexandria_ Orbital Defense Station: Mars, Habitat Beta, 1st Floor

VIDEO:

_In view on the left are two female soldiers, both in non-combat uniforms, implying that they are the Admiral and Commander, both taking cover behind a lifted area that would normally be a lunch area. One, however, has medals decorating her uniform, while the Commander only two medals above her left breast. To the right of the screen are two Grunts setting up a turret with an Elite barking orders, and kicking one of them. The Elite waves his arm towards an off-screen target and two Jackals come in, shields overlapping and march towards the Commander and Admiral. The Elite stays low with a carbine steady behind the small phalanx. _

_The Commander peeks her head and signals for the Senior Sergeant (who is noted by his ODST armor) to take a firing position up-front, using their makeshift cover as guard. The Senior Sergeant is using a sniper rifle in a prone position with only the barrel and part of his right arm and head sticking out from behind the corner. The Admiral says something, and the Commander then signals for the two Privates. The Marines are in their combat-uniform and take up firing positions behind a raised lunch area parallel to the Commander's and Admiral's firing position. _

_One of the Marines fidgets and fires his SMG into the phalanx. In

quick retaliation, the Elite stands up from his crouched position and fires one round into the Marines stomach. The Marine falls to the floor in a pool of his own blood, and without the safety of cover. The other Marine screams out and tries to help his friend, but the Admiral stares him down from doing so. The Elite ducks behind the phalanx, but not before an S2 round from the Senior Sergeant's sniper rifle takes a piece of the Elite's shoulder. At this time the Grunts have finished setting up the turret, but panic suddenly when they see the Elite on the floor bleeding. _

_The Jackals break their phalanx formation when one of them turns to help the Elite, but dies when the Admiral takes a quick shot to the back of its head with a Battle Rifle round. The second Marine comes out providing bursts of SMG fire, sending the Grunts behind the turret. The Jackal makes the shield cover him, but as the Marine provided SMG fire for cover fire, the Admiral runs to around the raised area to where the Jackal is taking cover. Her step alerts the Jackal, but the Admiral takes one shot from her magnum and ends its life before it does anything. The Grunt who isn't manning the turret sees her and fires a few needler rounds at her. A few pierce her flesh and make tiny explosions ripping and burning the flesh of her right shoulder. _

_At this time the Elite's shield is back up. He jumps onto the second Marine, pinning him to the floor, and pulls out a plasma rifle. The Senior Sergeant takes two quick shots. The first one misses, but the second hits the plasma rifle, blowing it up in the Elite's hand. The Elite doubles over and fires two carbine rounds as he takes cover behind a wall. The Grunt then fires the turret madly, and the Senior Sergeant rolls out of his prone position behind cover. The Commander then fires a Battle Rifle round into the Grunt manning the turret, killing it. _

_The second Marine takes cover as the Elite reaches around the corner and fires the carbine blindly. The Senior Sergeant drops his sniper rifle and pulls out a magnum, firing four shots at the second Grunt, but missing all of them. The Commander disappears from view behind the raised area, and reappears with just her hand, grabbing the Admiral and pulling her into cover. The Marine lobbs a grenade over the raised lunch area, backwards over his head. The Elite looks up at the grenade and attempts to make a diving roll, but is still hit by the blast, sending him tumbling end over end. The Grunt then fires faster without stop at the Marine behind cover, an easy shot for the Commander's Battle Rifle. The Commander runs out with her Battle Rifle steady and fires two rounds into the incapacitated Elite's head. The Senior Sergeant and Marine walk out from behind cover, weapons steady. The Marine shakes his head, and the Commander makes a gesture and the Marine walks toward the Admiral and helps her up. The Admiral nods her laughing and saying something, and everyone turns to look at her. _

/ end/

3. Chapter 3

****Chapter 3****

/ attached file 4 of 5/

October 19, 2552 (Military Calendar)

Subject: Helmet-Camera Feed 311

Issuing Officers: Commander S. Pier, Private A. L. Loisdottir, Senior Sergeant C. Z. Henderson, Aboard _Alexandria _Orbital Defense Station: Mars, Armory Delta, 5th Floor

VIDEO:

The camera feed begins showing two people, a man and woman, running away from the camera. Seemingly, the camera is running with the people, because the woman turns and halts the person with the camera. The man wears a standard Marine combat-suit, and the woman is in full dress, non-combat, uniform. Her turning reveals two medals pinned on her left breast.

"Ok, suit up. Only get what you can carry, except for you Sarge. I want you to dump your grenades save one and load yourself with as much S2 clips as you can get your hands on. Private, you can load up on demolitions. A few mine-det packs should do us nicely, but other than that, stick to standard. We don't need to blow ourselves up before the Covenant do", the woman says.

"Aye, ma'am, aye" the voice of the camera man and the other man in view say.

The crew work silently and efficiently. Suddenly, the camera jerks up, and starts to view the ceiling. All that is in view is the ceiling's metal frame with an eerie red hue from the emergency back-up lights on the walls. The camera turns back down and faces the woman.

"Permission to speak, ma'am", a voice says from off-screen.

"Permission granted", the woman says smiling, "You don't need my permission. You see something wrong, spit it right out ASAP, or we could end up on the wrong side of an Elite's sword."

"Ma'am, look at the ceiling. The back-up engine is on. That means the station's COMM systems are down."

"By, God, you've got an eye, sarge", the woman says, then turns and faces the man, "Private, find a frequency that isn't dead, and notify me when you get one"

_The group finishes packing, necessary supplies, and the camera turns to a wall. The camera nears the wall and a hand from off-screen reaches out and presses several buttons on the panel in view. _

"No dice"

_The shuffling of feet is heard, and the camera turns to the left and two hands off-screen level a pistol to meet the two Grunts coming in, one behind the other. A shot is heard and the wall behind the front Grunt is painted with blue blood. The pistol in view takes a shot, before the second Grunt reacts. The two Grunts drop to the floor at the same time. A harsh bark from outside is heard and a Jackal comes from outside with its shield up. Right behind came in an Elite with

two plasma rifles, guns blazing. The shout for cover is a female's, and the camera sneaks behind a wall. It peaks around a corner and is nearly hit by a plasma round sizzling by. The camera then levels with the floor, and an S2 comes into view. Through the scope of the S2, one can see the crosshair lined up for the Elite's head. The shot is taken and a smoke of the bullet's travel is left, along with a dent in the wall soaked in purple blood. The camera-scope zooms out and it's back to the pistol leveled. _

A burst of SMG rounds splashes uselessly on the Jackal's shield. In view, the camera catches the Jackal charging up its plasma pistol. A quick gasp and a click is heard. The hand belonging to the camera-carrier lobs a grenade next to the Jackal's feet.

"Fire in the hole!" the voice off-screen yells.

_The Jackal looks down at the grenade before it sends it flying into the ceiling. The camera person walks out from his cover with the S2 leveled. He looks down and sees the purple pool of blood and looks up at the ceiling. The blood from the Jackal on the ceiling looks almost human because of the glow of the emergency back-up lights. The camera person peeks out both corners and makes a quick hand signal. The Commander and Private follow quietly. _

A gun, not a plasma shot, is heard fired from somewhere off-screen. The camera quickly jolts to the left and behind, showing the Marine hit just above the right breast. The Marine's enter-wound starts to flood with blood and the Marine falls to the floor. The camera then changes its view to the arms of the Senior Sergeant revealing his black and white ODST suit soaked with his own blood.

"Friendly fire! Hold your fire! Three soldiers coming up!" the Commander yells.

_All that's heard in reply is a scoff, almost a snicker. Suddenly a flash of light appears. Upon closer inspection, the flash of light is an energy sword. It floats closer and takes a lunge at the camera. A bullet from the Commander's battle rifle stops it. The sniper rifle is leveled and fires a round into the now-visible Elite, and the Elite drops to the floor, revealing a battle rifle in the Elite's left-hand. _

The Commander tends to the hit Marine, and Marine is able to stand. He appears weak, but he mentions to the Commander that his battle armor and the sergeant's arm absorbed most of the round and he was bleeding from a small cut from the dent in his battle armor. The sergeant tends to his own wound, by quickly bandaging his left-arm and tying around it a bootlace to choke it from bleeding.

_The team makes their way to what had been a battle scene. There were two Marines, both diced up in a horrible bloody mess. Another, a civilian engineer, had two plasma burns on his chest. The fourth body was not even in any condition for one to tell what he could have been. Finally the team came across a body that had died from bleeding, and the other dead from a bullet wound through his head.

_

_The team picked up the supplies they needed from this room and solemnly walked out, ignoring what they had just seen. They meet a t-intersection. The camera peeks left, then right, and a hand from

off-screen gives a thumbs-up. The Commander uses her head to point left, and the sergeant takes up a firing position behind the corner. The Commander goes left, and the Marine takes her flank. Given the thumbs-up, the Marine turns to face the Commander's back as the camera swerves and takes up the flank position. _

A few bullet shots are heard. The camera falls forward and hits the floor. The video in view slowly interchanges between the team fighting off two Elites hand-to-hand and static. The video finally ends in full static.

/ end/

4. Chapter 4

****Author's Note:** Hmm, yeah. Long update. I'd like to say thanks to the readers for their liking of the story, but I'd also like to say sorry for not updating regularly. Anyways, here's the nextâ€| installmentâ€| enjoyâ€| and as alwaysâ€| R&R this sucker.**

****Chapter 4****

/ start/

I believe it should be noted before you open this file that my programming has allowed me to keep a log of rational-born thoughts, given to me by my creator, - NAME OMITTED, in the preceding attached files you have seen. I would also like to note that the succeeding attached file has excerpts of my log, specifically in these last few days. Do keep in mind that I keep a log on all the actions of the officers on board, which is where I get the information.

/ end/

/ attached file 5 of 5/

WARNING: FILE CORRUPTED.

WARNING: Large file. Press enter to open anyways.

/ start/

October 17, 2552

****Subject: Slip-space ruptures detected****

One of the issuing officers aboard the station noted that his radar picked up signs of slip-space ruptures. All protocols were met, and no incident was treated with low-grade quality. No other information or signs of a slip-space rupture showed up, and the report was filed and sent to ONI for clarification.

****Soldier Log:**** B-66-3QS-77 Commander Pier, Sarah has called Z-51-10B-80 Senior Sergeant Henderson, Cain Z. multiple times for reasons unknown. Protocol 78.55.088 allows full access to all security cameras, allowing eavesdropping, during any wartime situation. Exercising that protocol, I began my research on the two, and slowed my research on officers that have proven themselves to be

reliable.

****Soldier Log:**** B-66-3QS-77 Commander Pier, Sarah's and Z-51-10B-80 Senior Sergeant Henderson, Cain Z's relationship seems to one of mutual. Per JAG rule, any mutual relationships must be dealt with through court martial.

****October 18, 2552****

****Subject: Court Martial****

The officers continue to see each other despite command and threats of court martial. Force will be taken if the two do not halt. - F#SAAW adsjkl;23304 pa ,...//aq!!#wlse ..order taken. They have been alerted to theâ€|JAKQO1325)(A7 per high alert command \$AADS2das7safd////////\

sjfsaFadfal;3jl30203r#\$r3jfefksk3fsassd oqocc42iu24zxnmwq 342, zxo3pilxr

daAAAAfaSssjj2000111833111x6dsas666662dfafa3335a333555sfd\\\\\ dfs117''ldafs The two had a Longsword be ready for depar.as329874asfd

Measures were taken, and defenses were readied. However, it was the way the Covenant had attacked us that surprised us.23#)265234524 62256358257844245773624AASDFDfaslasdSDD228 117

****October 20, 2552****

****Soldier Log:****

The two arrived onto the Communications room at 2236 with an injured G-12-5UY-77 Private Loisdottir, Alexander L. The Private was not in any good condition whatsoever; he had suffered a sword wound on his shoulder, and a caved-in rib cage that caused internal bleeding.

Private Loisdottir had a presumed one hour to live, especially since the medical staff onboard was either KIA or MIA. The Commander demanded a communication be made with "Earth or the fleet, or anything god damn human". Further observation revealed that the Senior Sergeant was suffering a bullet wound on his left arm, and a small, but apparently painful, plasma burn on his left-thigh. The Commander herself had a plasma scar, but nothing too bad.

She then demanded a ship after I calmly reminded her that if she could not make an internal communication, then there would be no chance that an external communication would be made. I then reminded her that a Commander leaning on a court martial case cannot commandeer a ship, except in only extreme emergency.

She then replied in an angry voice about "how the fuck this wasn't a damn 'extreme emergency'". I began to tell her that under protocol 124.98.123 what she was considered as, and she gave me a hand signal that wouldn't be too polite in many places.

****Bay Log:**** Several ships have been detected docking into the docking bay, level four. Scanners read that they are hostile ships.

****Soldier Log:**** As predicted, G-12-5UY-77 Private First Class Loisdottir, Alexander Logan dies of internal bleeding at 02:17:40 October 20, 2552. Pier and Henderson decide to leave the body in the communications room as they make their way towards a docking bay in hopes of finding their Longsword. I tried to warn them that the Covenant have infested nearly 80 of the base, but they ignored my warnings.

"Keep us updated via the PA system. Warn us using your infrared. There may be a chance that at least two survive this to warn Earth", the Commander yells, tears falling off her face.

****VIDEO, NO AUDIO: ****

In view are the two soldiers, taking cover behind a makeshift cover of toppled vending machines and tables. The Sergeant suffers another wound, a more visible plasma burn scarring his right forearm. The sleeve is completely gone, and his arm is a blackened abomination of melting skin and third degree burns, rendering the arm essentially dead, as he fires with his left hand. The Commander has evidence of a "needler" wound on her back, but not bad.

_As they finish their last Grunt, the two come from behind cover, the two providing each other with ammunition. The Commander embraces the Senior Sergeant, and the Sergeant returns the hug with a pat on the back with his serviceable arm. The two stare at each other for a few seconds, and the Senior Sergeant starts speaking, nodding. The Commander nods in agreement, and the two continue on their way to the docking bay. _

****AUDIO, VIDEO CORRUPTED: ****

_Several plasma shots are heard firing, with a thunderous explosion. The video shows the explosion, two seconds late from the audio.

—

"Grik jes'no fassu ik naaru wort lonae!" an Elites voice barks aloud.

The video shows an Elite in front of three other Elites and a few Grunts, his carbine in the air and screaming out the words. The video then shows a blur of all visible persons on the video with a slight green tint. More yells of glory are heard, but none of them distinguishable. Three explosions are heard, and the screen goes blank.

****VIDEO: ****

_The screen shakes as the two soldiers come into view, the Senior Sergeant barely standing upright. The screen shakes again, and the Sergeant is knocked off balance and falls to the floor. The Commander grabs his serviceable arm, and pulls him back to his feet. _

"What was that?" the Commander's voice says, one second late from the video.

_The Sergeant shrugs, and starts to walk ahead, his magnum leveled with his shoulder. The Commander nods and levels her Battle Rifle.

—

5. Chapter 5

****Author's Note:** I hope you've been paying attention! Well, this is the final chapterâ€¦ I hope you do enjoy it. This makes references to previous chapters, and possibly to small details. Everything has been carefully writtenâ€¦ so there should be no unanswered questions, except the one's I choose to leave unanswered. As always, I beg of you to READ AND REVIEW this, but above all, I want you to enjoy itâ€¦ Thanks for reading this REALLY LONG Author's Note as well, I'm sure it took some stamina. Oh, biggest of all notes: NOTE the TENSE changes ;) Hmm, I guess I'm just looking for something to write after writing the story, and I'm too lazy to start a new project just yetâ€¦ so I'll continue writing this long Author's Note. Just kidding.**

****Chapter 5****

Fleet Admiral Harper nervously tapped his fingers on the railing. He looked around, seeing his bridge officers running this way and that, some yelling at each other, others typing in something and shaking their heads tiredly with a doomed look on their face. The bridge of his ship was cold and eerie. He could not help but hear only silence with that simple, high-pitched sound of swan song. It was only moments ago he had received the horrifying message from the Alexandria.

He was the only one on the bridge who had read it, but that was because it was top security, and he read it privately. No one was truly prepared for the invasion. He had just finished contacting Lord Hood before he received the message, asking for permission to destroy the small armada attacking. If Lord Hood had not given the negative, his attack would have cost Earth. Even though this warning letter was late, Earth still had a chance. He looked outside the window at the slowly-advancing Covenant line. The Malta exploded, joining the first station in a fiery destruction of twisted metal.

"Cainâ€¦" a voice calls out.

The room is black, even the emergency lighting has failed. The Senior Sergeant looks around. The room is too dark, and he cannot see his hand, although he is sure he is waving it front of his face. His ice-cold fingers touch his face, confirming that he is alive and that the room is simply dark. Or he is simply blind. Not that he knows what being blind is like.

"Cainâ€¦ Cain, are you with me?"

The voice is female.

"Sa- Sarahâ€¦ What happened?"

"HARD TO PORT!" Harper yelled.

The bridge members typed in the commands as the Admiral said them. Harper grabbed his railing as the ship made a dynamic change in speed and course, heading to their left. Even though the ship was a halcyon-class, he swore he could hear the ship's engines roaring to life. He looked out his window and saw another halcyon charge right

in between two Covenant flagships, taking hits from missile-intercepting beams that the Covenant were famous for. A small dot in that vacuum of space was what the halcyon seemed to protect, probably a large nuclear bomb. He looked away and the entire bridge was engulfed in light.

"Holy shit!" someone's voice yelled.

But not because of the explosion.

The Senior Sergeant naturally tries to grab the flashlight on his right boot with his right arm, but remembers the scar as the pain of the burn shoots at him. He brings his leg up and uses his left arm to grab the flashlight.

The light flashes as he turns on the flashlight, shining light. The walls are simple bricks painted in white. He looks around some more, exploring from his seated position against a wall. He could not see her; especially adding to his little suspense is that dust flies this way and that in front of him, catching the rays of light.

The Sergeant yells, coughing, "Sarah? Sarah!"

His voice only echoes, mocking his loneliness with a dead moan. He comes to the awful realization.

"Commanderâ€¦ Commander Pi- Commander Pierâ€¦sir", a soft female voice said.

The Elite chuckled, but understood.

"Pierâ€¦", the Elite tried out the word on his own tongue, "You have done well to protect your dear red planet, but not enough!"

The Commander smiled, and nodded.

"I failed", she said with a toothy grin on her face, almost laughing.

The Elite, took one look at her snickering, and drew his sword. He slashed downward at her thigh, but stopped midway, not completely cutting it off, but more-so than a simple cut of the flesh. Her exposed bone made her keel over, her eyes tearing.

"Do not insult me, human. I am a Fleet Commander", the Elite repeated for the tenth time in very articulate English.

The sun looked different on Mars, they've said. The Commander realized this, as she stared at the reflection in the gold armor of the Elite in front of her. She spat out some dust from her mouth. She could not help but wonder how Cain was faring.

The Elite nodded at the sorry excuse for a human. Most humans were better than this, especially for a Commander. Well, most humans were hysterical before death by execution, as well. He decided to just let her die of blood loss right at the spot, turning away. He signaled for his company to march, and slowly walked behind them, his sword still drawn.

Cain looks around, now limping on his one good leg. This is why she

had probably ditched him; he would only slow her down. If he was awake, he would have allowed it, so he is not mad that his love had left him. In fact, she apparently planned on making sure that he would live. He finds a well-stocked storage of non-perishables, and a table of assorted ammunitions, and piled next to the table is a one-foot pile of rifles, pistols, and even a few launchers and explosives.

He smiles, almost, letting a tear fall from his face in a long time. He realizes that he had just endured many corporal wounds, and brushed against death's cold sickle more than once, but this is what makes him shed a tear.

He falls to his knees, wondering what has happened. He does not even know how much time has passed between his freefall from an ODST-"shell" onto Mars.

He shakes his head, looking for something that will give him contact to something human, hoping that whatever he finds is good. He digs around, throwing boxes this way and that. The Sergeant grabs hold of the table to try and lift up himself up into a standing position, hoping he might find something on a shelf.

Along his face he feels a cool metal sling brush against his cheek and whisk away. It then comes back, gently pattering his head. He tugs at the cord, and light envelopes the storage place, revealing the entire bunker. The small bulb allows him to see a power switch, which he promptly turns on. The whole building lights up, revealing a huge storage space of weapons, including Warthogs equipped with both Gauss and Machine-Gun mounts. Peeking around a corner, he finds an outdated Scorpion, but still in working condition. Containers sit on large shelves, each labeled with such things as "explosives", or "non-perishables", or "Jackhammer". The Sergeant smiles, realizing he is in a military bunker, but frowns as he remembers where is the military?

The Commander looked back at the Sergeant, laying there. She looked at the man standing in front of her.

"Will it be safe?"

The man smiled, replying, "What, you don't trust me? We've got enough guns back there", he continued, while pointing towards the stock of weapons, "to stop an armada."

She smiled. He was truly safe, and that was all that mattered. She loaded her Battle Rifle and clicked the safety. Two Marines followed her as she walked out the door, and into a red glare.

She looked back and said softly, "Cain!"

Maybe he would wake up. The Sergeant stirred a little.

"Cain! Cain, are you with me?"

The Sergeant stirred a little more, but did not show a hint of replying. Not many comatose people do.

The Commander sighed, and walked out into the Mars desert.

Harper was sweating now. Most trips to Mars took less than an hour; he did not know why this was taking so long.

"Sir, permission to speak?" one of his ensigns on the bridge said, looking up from his console for the first time in the past three hours.

"Granted." the Admiral replied in a cold voice, still looking at the red planet, his stare unwavering.

"Why Mars? We just received reports that the Covenant has touched down on Earthâ€¦"

The Admiral did not respond or look at the ensign. He just stared at the planet, prepared to make his next move.

Lo and behold, there was indeed a Covenant flagship as Harper's ship closed in on the red planet, but of relatively small size. It did not move, and did not even try to fire back or put its shields up.

"Ship is in orbit, sir. Its shields are down, and evenâ€¦ even its engines are shut off. Pretty much a ghost ship if there weren't any radiations coming from it", one of the bridge officers spoke.

"Fire at will", the Admiral replied, coldly.

The entire bridge stopped and looked up at the Admiral.

"Sir? Sir, is that really a wise decision? It could be a trapâ€¦"

The Admiral did not reply. He simply looked at the officer who spoke up and stared into his eyes.

"Ye-Yes, sir!"

The officers and ensigns immediately started to type in commands. Archer missiles fired away, leaving streaks of white smoke trailing behind each missile. No missile-intercepting beam fired out, and the ship was engulfed in explosions. Fire spewed out from the ship, but quickly died in the vacuum of space. Suddenly, the Covenant flagship came to life, its shields suddenly flashing as the lagging Archer missiles hit the shield. Steaks of plasma flew into space, towards the Admiral's ship.

"Fire the MAC gun!"

The Admiral's ship took damage, its metal shielding melting and bubbling as the superheated plasma shots dug into the hull, but it fired two rounds of the MAC gun in retaliation.

"MAC gun overheatedâ€¦ offline! I can't get it to fuckin' work!"

One round hit the shield, making it shimmer and fade. The second round pierced the rest of the shield, and completely destroyed the flagship's hull, tearing through and leaving a giant hole.

"Nuke 'em! Nuke 'em now!" the Admiral yelled, his grip tightening on the rail.

The Sergeant starts to walk towards the back end of the bunker, winding around mazes of corridors, his pistol leveled. He comes to a four-way intersection, but decides to go straight. Passing the hallway, an off-color catches his eye from the usual white-brick that adorns all the walls with its presence. He backtracks, and his eyes widen with horror. Blood covers the walls of just this corridor. Presence of gunfire is seen, with only very few plasma scars on the walls. There are no bodies, but there are human handprints and footprints. No footprints of any of the Covenant species.

He looks down at the floor, and lying on the floor is a small black piece of technology. The Sergeant picks it up, and presses the only button he finds on it. A hologram of a short stout dwarf-like character with a flowing beard and a large axe appears on top of it.

"Eh? Ah! I've been released! Finallyâ€¦ took ye awhile there, Cain!" it said.

****Author's Note:** Well, I kind of have to end the story here. This is where the Echoes and Whispers end. I hope you have enjoyed the ficâ€¦ not official canon, I know, but I hate writing with just the characters they give usâ€¦ quite boring after awhile. Instead I like to add these fics that would still fit perfectly with the lore. Lots of questions to answerâ€¦ I can't wait.**

****Thank you for reading.** I know this is a BIG change in writing-style, and I know it is a BIG chapterâ€¦ but PLEASE READ AND REVIEW! Reviews let me know how well the story was, what I need to improve on, and so forthâ€¦ Happy reading :)**

****Epilogue and sequel pending on reactions to this chapterâ€¦****

End
file.